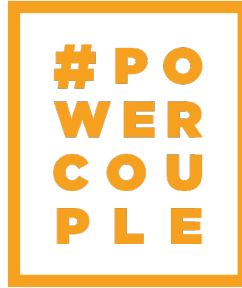


WHEN  
CHARACTER



& CHEMISTRY  
COLLIDE

**#powercouple** | *Hesed* | Chad Bruegman | 2.12.17

LG Weekly

## START .

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

**If you had to pick one movie to watch, either a romantic drama or romantic comedy, what would it be and why?** (*Dig deep, fellas!*)

## SHARE .

*Welcome to our series "**#PowerCouple.**"*

Every year at Red Rocks Church, we go through a series on relationships because God has so much to say to us about them. Relationships affect our lives in powerful ways. Who we surround ourselves with matters. Character matters. What we are looking for in a potential spouse matters. How we continue to date our spouse matters. Most importantly, knowing God's design for marriage can change everything, whether we are single, divorced, married, or remarried.

The tag-line for this series is "when chemistry and character collide." Regardless of your marital status, character will take you places that just plain chemistry can't. Chemistry with the opposite sex happens naturally, but it is only the kindling that starts the fire. What keeps the fire ablaze into marriage is character. Godly character is the logs of the fire that keeps the love burning during the ups and downs of life.

As we journey through the book of Ruth, we are going to see how chemistry and character collide, how doing the right thing matters, and how God can redeem any situation, even if it might seem hopeless. Our

prayer is that this series will point to the God who can restore those of us who have drifted far from him, that we would experience forgiveness and restoration, and then turn around and live with a renewed commitment to follow Jesus. We hope going through the book of Ruth would give hope to the single, divorced or widowed. We hope you are reminded that it is God who sees, redeems, and gives us purpose. Finally, for those who are married, we pray that God would rekindle a fresh fire in your lives to put God at the center of your relationship.

Chad kicked off our series talking about a relationship that is really a Hollywood love story. The book of Ruth is a story about a godly man and a godly woman, who cared more about character than putting their own agendas first; and how their love story grew out of the most unlikely places.

Have a few people take a couple verses each and read aloud Ruth 1:1-18

**What were some of the serious life struggles that Ruth and Naomi experienced?**

**When Ruth had an opportunity to leave Naomi, she made a sacrificial and character defining decision.**

**Why was this such a pivotal moment for her?**

**Why do you think it can be difficult to trust God with our relationships? Why do we try to make things happen in our own timing?**

## **G R O W**

Mothers-in-law are often ridiculed behind closed doors and the punch line of jokes, but the reality is that they can be world-changers and history makers. But Naomi lived her life in such a way that Ruth wanted to follow her God. The way her mother-in-law lived made Ruth respond with kindness, self-sacrifice, and loyalty. Ruth was faithful, kind, and willing to go the extra mile to take care of people. In a way, her actions reflected the loyal and unceasing love of God – she demonstrated a love that won't ever leave us, no matter what.

In Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth* (Vol. 6, pp. 633–634) we see how this concept of 'hesed' was so powerful and why it meant so much given the situation Naomi and Ruth found themselves in at this time:

The firmness of Naomi's double command to Orpah and Ruth to return to their mother's homes is

matched by the tenderness toward them she expressed in a double blessing. She begins by praying that Yahweh would demonstrate the same *hesed* toward them that they have demonstrated toward her (v. 8b). This statement is remarkable for three reasons. First, she invokes the name of Yahweh when she addresses her Moabite daughters-in-law, apparently assuming that the authority of the God of Israel extended beyond the nation's borders into foreign territory, in this instance the territory of Chemosh. On the surface the prayer appears to express deep faith in Yahweh. This impression is compromised later in v. 15, where she gives tacit recognition to the gods of Moab.

Second, the blessing assumes that Yahweh is interested in the affairs of this family and can be invoked to deal favorably with these Moabites. In so doing Naomi introduces one of the key theological terms in the book. As we have noted earlier, *hesed* (NIV "kindness") cannot be translated with one English word. It is a covenant term, wrapping up in itself all the positive attributes of God: love, covenant faithfulness, mercy, grace, kindness, loyalty. In short, it refers to acts of devotion and lovingkindness that go beyond the requirements of duty. Divine acts of *hesed* would bring the opposite of the pain and grief these women have all been experiencing for more than a decade. Specifically it could involve the application of the covenant blessings specified in Lev 26:3-13 and Deut 28:1-14.

Third, Naomi recognizes the acts of *hesed* that Orpah and Ruth have performed on behalf of the dead and herself in the past. With "your dead and ... me" she means her deceased husband and her two sons and herself, that is, all the Israelites in this family. Indeed in her effusive praise of her daughters-in-law she presents these Moabite women as models of grace for Yahweh himself. She holds out the possibility that human kindness may be answered in kind by divine action, based of course on the assumption that Yahweh, the God of Israel, actually cares about these Moabite women. Inasmuch as they have shown kindness to the least of the Israelites, so may Yahweh show kindness to them.

*Hesed* is a covenant term of kindness, loyalty, and faithfulness all combined together. Naomi desired for God to show them that same kindness as they rightfully would want to go back home to find husbands. Ruth refused and told Naomi, "Where you go I go." She knew what it might mean for her relational life. It is a symbolic picture of the sacrificial character of God. When we do relationships right, there is a willingness to lay down our own desires to lift up another person and in turn, that they do the same.

**Have you experienced a difficult time, yet found God unrelenting in his closeness and pursuit of you? In other words, have you experienced *hesed* in your relationship with God?**

**Do you feel that you currently experience *hesed* in your marriage, dating life, and/or other relationships? If not, what do you think needs to change?**

## M O V E

Ruth showed great faithfulness and loyalty, which set her on a course she might never have experienced if she didn't put character first. While she was unaware, God was developing in her the very character that would eventually catch the eye of Boaz. People of character tend to notice other people of character; the danger is stopping short of that and relying on chemistry alone.

In life, chemistry comes easy for most of us. It isn't hard work to find that we are easily drawn to some people and not to others. The difficulty is choosing the right people when chemistry happens. Chemistry is a God-given thing, but we must be wise with it. We can have great chemistry with the wrong people. We need to guard our hearts and be smart with the types of people we allow to speak into our lives. But when character is already there, then chemistry can do its thing and light the fire to a great relationship.

Let's read Ruth 2:1-12

What can we learn about relationships from this story? For those of us who are single, one lesson is that we need to worry more about doing the right thing than meeting the right person. Ruth's character led her choices, which became a passport into a whole new chapter of her life. Eventually, chemistry collided with character and the rest is history. Second, if we are currently dating, we need to look in the mirror and ask ourselves: is this person I am dating a man or woman of God? Do they have the character that can sustain a life-long marriage or is it just chemistry? Finally, for those of us who are married, have we lost the *hesed* that keeps the fire burning hot? It is easy to start the fire, but only character can keep a marriage thriving.

**If you are single, widowed, or divorced, is there something about the message and this story that really stood out to you? Why?**

**For those of us who are married, what is one take-away that you think you can start doing to enrich your own relationship?**

**Get some counsel:** *We tend to treat our cars better than our own relationships. We take cars in for maintenance, but not our relationships. All individuals and couples need to make it a priority. At least once a year, meet up with a godly counselor and get a check-up. Sometimes talking through your struggles can help you more than you know and might get your relationship back on track. Red Rocks Church has a resource list of local Christ-centered counselors. Just visit [www.redrockschurch.com/resources](http://www.redrockschurch.com/resources) and click on 'counseling' or talk with one of our Campus Pastors or Life Group Ministry Leaders.*

## **P R A Y**

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

## **T O G O**

### **Psalm 9:10**

*Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.*